WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HEAVEN

J. T. WHITLEY

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WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HEAVEN

A STUDY IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

BY
J. T. WHITLEY, D.D.
Author of "Filled with Messages from Thee," Etc.

I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. John 14: 6.
HEAVEN AND EARTH SHALL PASS AWAY, BUT MY WORDS SHALL NOT PASS AWAY. Matthew 24: 35.

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TO

My Daughters

MARY ESTHER WHITLEY
ANNIE WHITLEY PLEASANTS

AFFECTIONATE, FAITHFUL
CAPABLE

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to ascertain and set forth with at least approximate fullness the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning Heaven. The teachings of the Apostles and other Biblical writers are referred to as interpretative of the Master's doctrine; but no attempt has been made to present all the passages in the Epistles and elsewhere, which might have been included if the object in view had been to show what the Bible as a whole, or the entire New Testament, has to say about the future life of the saints.

The author's method has been to examine the four Gospels with great care, collate all the passages in which Jesus spoke about Heaven, classify them under appropriate heads, and interpret them in a simple and straightforward way, with such help as he found available in the writings of wise and godly men who have sought to interpret the Master's teachings. Passages containing the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," have not been included, since these do not relate to the future life so much as to the reign of God on earth in the present moral order.

So far as the author is aware, this exact subject has not been treated in book form before.

While Heaven has been written about in Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and other forms of literature, there seems not to have been published any monograph, in which an attempt has been made to exhibit and interpret all of the recorded utterances of Jesus upon this vital and engaging subject. It is hoped, therefore, that the present discussion, however inadequate, may serve to throw at least a few rays of light upon matters which intimately concern the eternal interests of all mankind. These chapters have been written prayerfully with humble trust in the Divine Spirit's help, and the volume is now sent forth in the hope that it may, in some small measure at least, bring honor to the Heavenly Father and his redeeming Son, and may shed heavenly radiance upon many a pilgrim path.

J. T. WHITLEY.

NORFOLK, VA.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE 7

CHAPTER I

The Desire to Know 11

CHAPTER II

The Only One Who Knows 16

CHAPTER III

The Nature of Heaven 24

CHAPTER IV

The Father in Heaven 30

CHAPTER V

The Saviour in Heaven 36

CHAPTER VI

The Angels in Heaven 45

CHAPTER VII

The Saints in Heaven: Certainty 55

CHAPTER VIII

The Saints in Heaven: Dignity 61

CHAPTER IX

The Saints in Heaven: Fellowship 68

CHAPTER X

The Saints in Heaven: Experience 76

CHAPTER XI

The Saints in Heaven: Occupation 83

CHAPTER XII

The Saints in Heaven: Preparation 92

CHAPTER XIII

If Ye Know These Things 99

CHAPTER I

THE DESIRE TO KNOW

FOR more than sixty years I have been interested more or less keenly in the subject of Heaven. As a child I heard my Christian mother talk about it in reverent tones, and listened to her singing of it as she went about the household work. In the Sunday school I heard and read about the "Home over there," and joined with teachers and scholars in singing the familiar song of that day: "There is a happy land, far, far away." Later on, when in my sixteenth year I came into a definite and joyous religious experience and united with the Church, it was a delight to read about heaven in the pages of Holy Writ, to think of it as the home which was to be mine in the far future, to pray to Him whom I conceived to have His throne in that beautiful city, and to sing the hymns in which devout hearts had poured out their aspirations for the "land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign." In still later days, when I had been ordained to the sacred ministry of the gospel and had found in the pulpit an opportunity of speaking the divine message, it was a joy to preach about heaven, to depict its glories as I conceived them

to be, and to invite the sinful and the heavy laden to have their sins cleansed away, and to prepare for the "Home of the soul" that Jesus had gone to make ready for his disciples. And now after many years, no longer privileged to speak often from the pulpit because of gathering infirmities, I find myself more deeply interested in heaven than ever before, because I am expecting at no distant day to find out for myself by actual experience the many things about heaven that I have long wished to know. One who is soon to change his residence from a shifting tent to "the city which hath the foundations," naturally desires to know as much as possible about the place to which he is going, and something of the details of the life that he is to live forever there.

It is certain that this desire to know all that is at present knowable about heaven is shared by multitudes of Christians, and to some extent by many who are not numbered in the membership of any Church. Some persons profess to believe that there is no heaven in reality, and so they feel no interest in reading or hearing about it. Others assume an agnostic attitude, saying that we can know nothing at all in this present life as to any life that may lie beyond. But the great mass of men and women who live in Christian lands do believe in the reality of heaven, even if many are vague in their notions

about it, and many are not shaping their conduct with reference to it. All devout souls naturally look forward to the solemnities of their passage from this world to that which lies beyond, and their aspirations after what they conceive to be the joys and glories of heaven naturally find expression in prayer and praise. In early life it is not so natural for thoughts of heaven to be prominent in the mind, though sometimes youth does aspire ardently after the land of eternal youth. As the years go by and thought matures while burdens accumulate, one is apt to turn his thoughts more definitely toward the life of rest and purity and nobler usefulness that lies beyond the grave. And when age advances to the period of infirmity, and the pleasures of this life dwindle while its cares and burdens increase, the child of God becomes more and more deeply interested in the home which the Master has promised his disciples in the Father's house of many mansions, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." The soul thus burdened, facing the fact that he is approaching nigh to the place "where we lay our burdens down," is apt to resort to the Holy Scriptures for light on the future, and especially to learn all that can be known about heaven. In those pages he finds that other souls in the long ago desired to know about the future life. He finds

in the book of Job the question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job xiv. 14). He reads the joyous words of David: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 11). And he dwells with sympathetic understanding upon the great saying of Paul: "Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Turning from the pages of Scripture to the recorded lives of good men and women of later times, one finds everywhere a devout and eager curiosity concerning the life beyond. Even where that curiosity has not found expression in biographies it has existed in greater or less intensity in accordance with the natural workings of the human mind. The desire to know what lies in the future is inevitable to the healthy mind, and the gratification of it is a source of deep satisfaction to the devout soul. Even where the light is most dim the eager one lingers and longs for even the tiniest gleam from the other shore of the mystic River. Many questions press forward craving to be answered: Where is heaven? Is it a place, or merely a state? If a place, is it located in some distant star, or is it to be found here upon a renovated earth under the same familiar heavens? Shall

the happy soul that wins heaven be privileged to behold the Infinite Father Himself, or will the Incarnate Son forever represent the invisible Father to the sons and daughters whom he has brought to glory? In what form will the Christ be manifested to the saints in glory? Will friends be brought together in heaven, and will they recognize each other? Will families be permitted to live in a fellowship as close and intimate as that which marked their earthly life? Will the little children who died here be found there still in their immaturity, or will they have developed into full-grown men and women whose lives have never been marred and stained by sin? What will be the occupations of the dwellers in heaven? Is rest the chief feature, or is worship still more prominent, or is holy service in behalf of others the chief thing that will occupy the happy ones who have inherited the great salvation? What are to be the relations between the redeemed saints and the angels who never fell from their original innocency? Will there be eternal progress in character and felicity in heaven? Such questions, and perhaps many others, arise from time to time in the minds and hearts of those who are looking forward to a home in the City of God. Is there any way to know even a little about heaven? Let us look and see.

CHAPTER II

THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS

WHEN we begin to ask questions about Heaven it is natural to look around for sources of information. If any living person can give the answers, it is important to find him and learn what he knows. If any person or persons of any past age knew the hidden things of the life beyond, and if records of their knowledge have come down to us, it is important that we find and study those records. If a Hand from above has drawn aside the veil and offered us even a glimpse of the Home of the blest, it is a great privilege and a solemn duty to make use of such an opportunity. Such knowledge is to be coveted above all lore that men are used to esteem.

In reading the accounts that we have of men and nations other than those which are prominent in the Bible, we find very little, if any, light upon the problem before us. There seems to have been among the ancients, even back to the very dawn of history, some notion of a life beyond the present, in which there are rewards for those whom the divinities approve, as well as retributions for those who have incurred the displeasure of the supernatural powers. But

there is no evidence that even the wisest philosopher of the heathen world ever caught a glimpse of a destiny which might be regarded as comparable to the Heaven of our modern thought. In fact, most of the sages were doubtful upon the question of individual immortality, not being able to affirm with any degree of confidence that the soul of man survives the dissolution of the ties that bind it to the body. Our questions about Heaven find no certain answer there.

A similar result follows our application to the modern cults that claim to hold communication with the disembodied spirits that have passed on before. All attempts to ascertain something definite about the departed and the conditions that surround them, well meant as they may be conceded to be, are so beclouded by so-called "mediums" and by unauthorized inferences from obscure phenomena, that no reliance can be placed upon them in seeking light upon the reality and conditions of Heaven.

When one is convinced that light cannot be had from the quarters just mentioned, it is natural and wise to turn to the one Book that claims to have definite information concerning the things that lie beyond the veil. But in searching that great group of writings, numbering thirty-nine separate documents, which we know as the Old Testament, one finds to his

disappointment a much less brilliant light upon the problems of the future than he had hoped to receive. Not that the Old Testament is entirely silent upon the subject of the future life, with its rewards for the good and its penalties for the doers of evil. It is unnecessary to quote passages here to prove this assertion. But it remains true that the books of the Old Testament give us no definite knowledge of Heaven as we understand the term. The Hebrew conception of the state of the dead was that of a region called Sheol, synonymous with the New Testament word Hades, a place of shadows and ghostly beings, some of whom indeed were understood to be better off than when on earth, but far from that keen intelligence and abounding life and joy that we are accustomed to associate with the notion of heaven. It has been often and truly said that the rewards of righteousness in the Old Testament are chiefly material and temporary, while the prospect of felicity beyond the grave is comparatively held in the background. No doubt, men like David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah fed their souls upon the hope of a blessed immortality; but the writings that have come down to our day do not answer with any degree of definiteness the questions that we are constantly asking about heaven.

Turning to the New Testament is like passing out of the dim starlight, or at most out of moon-

light, into the radiance of the rising sun. Here we begin to find answers to at least some of our anxious questions. There is more light beaming forth from the twenty-seven booklets that we call the New Testament than was ever shed by all the literature of the wisest nations of the world, combined with the utterances of all the prophets and psalmists, historians and sages, recorded in the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures. More than this may be said. There is clearer light on the subject of Heaven in the Gospel according to John, than in all the secular literature of the world, plus all the utterances of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Reserving the four Gospels for consideration further on, let us question the writers of the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation of John as to what testimony they present concerning heaven. There is no space here to record that testimony at length, even if it were not foreign to the present discussion. It must suffice to say that Paul, Peter, and the other New Testament writers not only take for granted the reality of heaven, but in various places affirm their belief in such a destiny for the saints in explicit terms, and depict in such colors as they can command the joys and glories of that better life. Peter tells his brethren of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. i.

4). Paul tells of his being caught up into "the third heaven," where he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 2–4). And the writer of the Revelation thus vividly describes the joys of the heavenly inhabitants: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 16, 17). It is safe to say that heaven is a conception that runs like a bright stream of soul refreshment through all the writings of the Apostles and those associated with them in producing the New Testament literature, and that the goal of all their teaching is found in a holy and blessed home for godly men and women and innocent little children beyond this present life. In this chapter, however, it is not purposed to do more than mention this apostolic testimony, reserving further reference to their teachings to be used as interpretations of, and side lights upon, the testimony of Him whose word is supreme over all.

The only One who knew and still knows at first-hand all about Heaven, and who can answer, if he will, all our inquiries about it, is the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, Jesus of

Nazareth, God manifest in the flesh. What the prophets and psalmists dimly glimpsed, and the apostolic writers more clearly understood, was secondhand information at best. What Jesus said about heaven was based on absolute knowledge. This is evident from the fact that his original home was in heaven. He said over and over again that he existed before his incarnation, that he descended out of heaven, that the Father sent him into the world to do his will, that he was about to leave the world and go unto the Father, to share the glory that he had with the Father before the creation of the world. Hear his very words: "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John viii. 58). "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5). "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven" (John iii. 13). "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John vi. 38). "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven" (John vi. 51). "I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me" (John viii. 42). "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them [the disciples] into the world" (John xvii. 18).

Not only had Christ existed with the Father originally, and had been sent into the world by the Father, but he was going back to the Father at the completion of his earthly mission. He said to the disciples at a critical time in their experience: "What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (John vi. 62). "Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto him that sent me" (John vii. 33). "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father" (John xvi: 28). After his resurrection he said to Mary Magdalene: "Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx. 17). To the penitent robber on the cross beside him he gave the pledge: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise " (Luke xxiii.43).

In this connection it is worth while to call attention to that remarkable expression found in John iii. 13, already quoted: "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, *who is in heaven.*" I am aware that the last clause of this verse is not found in some of the manuscripts, and is omitted in some of the critical editions of the New Testament text. But still the underlying thought is entirely harmonious with what we know of the self-consciousness of Jesus,

which one writer fitly expresses by the remark that "Christ's proper abode and home were in heaven," and that "he maintained a vital and continuous communion therewith, dwelling in the Spirit in heaven, even while in the flesh upon earth." In a very real sense it was true that Jesus was in heaven while yet he trod the hills and vales of Judea and Galilee.

We reach the conclusion, therefore, in our quest for knowledge about heaven, that no one but Jesus Christ had first-hand information, and that he did possess while on earth full knowledge of those "heavenly things" which he withheld from Nicodemus, because that "teacher of Israel" was incapable of receiving them. This fullness of knowledge Jesus possessed and was able to impart to discerning men, in virtue of the fact that he declared concerning himself: that he lived in heaven before the incarnation, that he came down from heaven at the bidding of his Father, that he was in communion with heaven while still upon earth, and that he was going to return to heaven at the close of his earthly mission, to share in the glory that he had with the Father before the foundation of the world. Relying upon the soundness of these conclusions, and believing that Jesus knew all about heaven, let us examine his words as recorded by the Evangelists and reverently gather the information they contain.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF HEAVEN

ONE of the age-long questions that men have asked concerning Heaven is, whether it is a place, or merely a state, or whether it is both a place and a state of being. Consulting the utterances of the only One who knows, we hear Jesus saying to his disciples in that memorable talk in the upper room on the evening before his death: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 1–3). This is the clearest and most definite statement recorded in the Gospels, wherein Jesus throws light upon the question under consideration. He calls the future home of his faithful disciples "a place," and further describes it as "my Father's house," declaring that in that "house" are "many mansions," or dwelling places. The word translated "place" is the standard term used in the New Testament to denote "any portion of space marked off, as it were, from surrounding

space." (See article "*topos*" in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.)[1] The word rendered "house" means primarily "an inhabited edifice, a dwelling," and is used in that sense uniformly by the New Testament writers. (See article "*oikia*" in Thayer's Lexicon.) In harmony with these terms denoting place is the utterance of Jesus as recorded in Matthew v. 34: "Swear not . . . by heaven, for it is the throne of God." If there is a throne, it is fair to infer that there must be space for it to occupy, and this means that heaven is a place. The word translated "mansions" appears to confirm this view. The Greek word "*monai*" in John xiv. 2 means dwellings, places of abode, and of these Jesus says there are many in his Father's house. Note also that he uses the adverb "where" in speaking of the future home of his disciples: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be" (John xii. 26). "Where" and "there" in their literal sense imply location or place. Futhermore in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, one of the most solemn utterances that ever fell from the lips of Jesus, he represents the beggar as being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, which is a figurative way of saying that Lazarus went to heaven. Is not this an intimation that

[1] Harper & Brothers, publishers, New York.

space is a characteristic of the future home of the saints?

If the plan of this treatise included a discussion of the testimony of the Apostles and other New Testament writers, many passages might be quoted to show the harmony of their utterances with the words of their Divine Master. But we are concerned chiefly with what Christ himself taught. It may be said in general, however, that outside the utterances of the Master, as recorded in the four Gospels, we have no new and definite light in the New Testament concerning the question as to whether heaven is a place, or a state, or both. Where the Apostles speak at all they simply echo the words and thoughts of Him who "spake as never man spake."

It may not be without interest and a certain degree of value, however, to quote in exposition of the words of Jesus a few opinions which wise and devout men have expressed on this subject. Dr. Augustus H. Strong, an eminent theologian, uses this language: "Is heaven a place, as well as a state? We answer that this is probable, for the reason that the presence of Christ's human body is essential to heaven, and that this body must be confined to place. Since deity and humanity are indissolubly united in Christ's single person, we cannot regard Christ's human soul as limited to place

without vacating his person of its divinity. But we cannot conceive of his human body as thus omnipresent. As the new bodies of the saints are confined to place, so, it would seem, must be the body of their Lord. But, though heaven be the place where Christ manifests his glory through the human body which he assumed in the incarnation, our ruling conception of heaven must be something higher even than this—namely, that of a state of holy communion with God. Although heaven is probably a place, we are by no means to allow this conception to become the preponderant one in our minds. . . . Heaven and hell are essentially conditions, corresponding to character, conditions in which the body and the surroundings of the soul express and reflect its inward state. The main thing to be insisted on is therefore the state; place is merely incidental. The fact that Christ ascended to heaven with a human body, and that the saints are to possess glorified bodies, would seem to imply that heaven is a place."[2]

To similar purpose is the opinion expressed by the great Swiss theologian, F. L. Godet: "This heavenly dwelling is above all the emblem of a spiritual state: that of communion with

[2] "Systematic Theology," by Augustus Hopkins Strong, D.D., LL.D.; American Baptist Publication Society, publishers, Philadelphia.

the Father, the filial position which is accorded to Christ in the divine glory, and in which he will give believers a share. But this state will be realized in a definite place, the place where God most illustriously manifests his presence and his glory—heaven."[3] Dr. Marcus Dods makes this comment: "'My Father's house' is used here [in John xiv. 2] of the immediate presence of the Father and of that condition in which his love and protection are uninterruptedly and directly experienced. This is most naturally thought of as a place, but with the corrective that 'it is not in heaven one finds God, but in God one finds heaven.'"[4] Let one more quotation suffice, from the Dictionary of Religious Knowledge, by Abbott and Conant:[5] "Is heaven a place, or a state? Both a place and a state—a place infinitely more beautiful than any eye hath ever seen—a state infinitely more blessed than any heart hath ever conceived."

These opinions of wise and devout men are offered, not as having authority, but merely as interpretative of the Master's words, and like all interpretation should be taken for only what they are worth. I see no reason, however, for

[3] Godet's Commentary on John, Funk & Wagnalls, publishers, New York.

[4] Expositor's Greek Testament, George H. Doran Company, publishers, New York.

[5] Harper & Brothers, publishers, New York.

dissenting from the view that what the Scriptures call "heaven" combines the characteristics of both a state and a place. Yet, while the idea of state, or condition, seems to call for no special comment just here, it should be said that we cannot definitely know what is included in the Scriptural use of "place" as applied to the future abode of the saints. How far spatial relations may be predicated of the world to come, must remain an insoluble problem while our present limitations remain.

If heaven is a place, where is it? Some have conjectured the great star Sirius, while others think that this earth, renovated and refitted, will be the future abode of the saints. All such speculations are vain. A veil of impenetrable mystery conceals the location of heaven, and with this we must be content.

CHAPTER IV

THE FATHER IN HEAVEN

IF Jesus said but little about Heaven as a place, leaving the question of locality uncertain, as of but little importance, not so has he left us in doubt as to who are the inhabitants of the House of Many Mansions. First of all, he said over and over again that Heaven is the Home of the Father—his Father and ours. It is interesting to note that the first recorded utterance of Jesus, when he was twelve years old, reveals his consciousness of the Fatherhood of God. To his mother, in reply to her chiding question as to why he had detached himself from their company when they started homeward from Jerusalem, he said: "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" Nearly a score of years later, when he uttered those revolutionary sayings that are commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, he used the expression "your Father who is in heaven," or its equivalent, no less than twenty-nine times. In this filial relation toward his Father he associates himself with his disciples, as may be seen in the message which he sent to his brethren by Mary Magdalene on the morning of his resurrection: "Go

unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx. 17).

There is a wealth of meaning in the way in which Jesus associates Heaven with the Fatherhood of God. The literature of the world, aside from the New Testament and writings based upon it, knows little if anything of the paternal relation of the Infinite One to mankind. Even the Old Testament saints appear to have had but a dim idea of such a relation. To them he was Creator, King, Lawgiver, Judge, Deliverer, but rarely ever realized as Father. At least that is the impression conveyed by the utterances of psalmists and prophets, the most spiritual men of the ages before the advent of the Son, who alone reveals the Father in his fullness to men. Jesus also knew perfectly that God is Sovereign over the universe, as he voiced the truth on a memorable occasion: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25). But the favorite word of Jesus when talking with God or telling others about him was "Father," as the Gospels abundantly show. In prayer he appeals to the Hearer of prayer as "Father," or as "Holy Father," or "Righteous Father," as recorded in the prayer before the cross (John xvii. 11–25).

And in his intimate conversations with the disciples, as well as in his more public teaching when crowds hung upon his words, every allusion to God is made in the words "the Father," or "my Father," or "your Father." Accordingly, when he speaks of heaven he calls it "my Father's house," thus associating the future home of the redeemed soul with the presence and blessing of the Supreme Father, "from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15). In harmony with this utterance is the explicit declaration of Jesus to his disciples: "One is your Father, even he who is in heaven" (Matt. xxiii. 9).

Jesus represents the Father in heaven as beholding His human children even in their closest retirement, with ears open to their prayers and hands full of blessings to bestow upon them. He said: "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Matt. vi. 6). "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye; Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." Then follow expressions of ardent desire that the Father's kingdom may come, and the Father's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Last come humble peti-

tions for daily bread, forgiveness of debts, and protection from the temptations of the Evil One. It is heartening to remember that this prayer of God's children is addressed to Him who is not merely Maker and Ruler, but in a special sense the Father of those who are voicing their aspirations and needs. And that Father is "in heaven," far removed from all the limitations of earthly parentage. Even human parents, in spite of their "being evil" and limited by many hampering conditions, know how to give good gifts to their children; how much more then, says Jesus, will your Father in heaven, who is free from all evil and unhampered by circumstances, give good things to them that ask Him (Matt. vii. 11). He sheds forth the Holy Spirit from the fountain of his Fatherhood, and he gives not only bread for the body, but "the true bread out of heaven," which means his only-begotten Son, who gave his body for the life of the world (John vi. 32–51).

From the stores of his boundless wisdom the Father in heaven reveals to his human children all that they need to know in this world concerning his Son and the redeeming work that he came to accomplish. When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who say ye that I am?" and Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Master said to him:

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 15-17). In harmony with this are the words of Jesus to the disciples, conveying the assurance that the Holy Spirit, the promised Helper, "shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 13).

The Father in heaven is one who delights to forgive sins; but he requires that men shall repent and forsake their sins in order to forgiveness. Moreover, he will not accept any man's repentance as sincere and adequate until he has forgiven those who have sinned against him. Jesus emphasizes this requirement in the words that immediately follow the Lord's Prayer: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 15). But when these conditions are met, the Father's heart sheds forth its balm of pardon from the heavenly home into the waiting heart of his penitent and forgiving child. Akin to this are the words of Jesus giving his disciples commandment to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors, with the assurance that they shall thus become "the sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 44, 45). In doing such things

he declares that his disciples become, in imitation of himself, "the light of the world," and his charge to all who would be sons and heirs of the Heavenly Parenthood is this: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

CHAPTER V

THE SAVIOUR IN HEAVEN

JESUS said that Heaven is the Home, not of the Father only, but also of himself, the Divine Saviour of men. To the hostile Jews who hung about him with their evil designs, he declared on a memorable occasion: "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John viii. 58). In the prayer that he offered in the presence of his disciples on the evening before his death, he prayed: "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5). To some of his disciples who were murmuring their dissent at some things he had just spoken, he put the question: "What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (John vi. 62). In these passages he distinctly asserts his preëxistence in a sphere where he shared the glory of the Father before the world was created. In another passage he affirms that the Father loved him before creation: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). In harmony with these words of Jesus is the declaration of the Apostle John in the Prologue to his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was

with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (John i. 1, 2). And the Apostle Paul wrote of "Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 5–7). In the face of these explicit statements there is no room for doubt concerning the teaching that the original home of the Son was in Heaven with the Infinite Father.

Jesus affirmed also, over and over again, that he left his home in heaven for a time, to dwell among men in order to execute his Father's gracious purpose of salvation. He speaks of himself as "He that descended out of heaven" (John iii. 13), "Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (John x. 36). He declared: "I am from above; . . . I am not of this world" (John viii. 23); "I am come down from heaven" (John vi. 38); "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven" (John vi. 51); "I came forth and am come from God" (John viii. 42); "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world" (John xvi. 28). And in his prayer before the cross, he said to the Father: "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world" (John xvii. 18). If language means anything, and if the veracity of the Holy Nazarene is

beyond all question, not only his preëxistence, but his coming to earth and taking human nature upon him in the incarnation, is a glorious fact surcharged with hope and help for humanity.

Certain words of Jesus, along with other considerations, appear to warrant the statement that while he dwelt on earth he was also in a real sense a dweller in heaven. Not in heaven as a place, for place implies bodily presence; but in heaven as a state, this affirmation is made. One passage may here be cited: "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven" (John iii. 13). Jesus said this to Nicodemus in that noted interview by night in Jerusalem. As previously stated, I am aware that the words, "even the Son of man, who is in heaven," are not found in some of the oldest manuscripts, though included in some ancient authorities. It is possible that they were inserted later by some copyist, though some eminent scholars think they are the very words of Jesus. On the whole, the comment of Lyman Abbott commends itself: "The expression 'which is in heaven' indicates not merely that Christ's proper abode and home were in heaven, but also that he maintained a vital and continuous communion therewith, dwelling in the Spirit in heaven, even while in the flesh upon

earth. The Christian's experience interprets, though it does not fully measure, this mystery of the heavenly life in the flesh" (Com. on John).[1] Marcus Dods gives it as his opinion that these words "affirm that although he had come out of heaven he was still in it, and they show that a condition of being, not a locality, was meant by heaven" (Com. on John in Expositor's Greek Testament).[2] The great exegete Godet says in his comment on this verse: "The Lord (Jesus) led two lives parallel to each other, an earthly life and a heavenly life. He lived in his Father, and, while living thus with the Father, he gave himself unceasingly to men in his human life. The teaching in parables, in which the heavenly things take on his lips an earthly dress, is the true language answering to that existence which is formed of two simultaneous lives, the one penetrating the other" (Com. on John).[3] The view here expressed harmonizes with what we know of the consciousness of Jesus, revealed in his intimate prayers to the Father, and also in many of his teachings to his disciples. His frequent and protracted seasons of private communion with God, his familiar intercourse with the heavenly world in the Transfiguration

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[1]From Dr. Abbott's Commentary on John, copyright by A. S. Barnes & Company, publishers, New York.

[2]George H. Doran Company, publishers, New York.

[3]Funk & Wagnalls, publishers, New York.

scene, his joyous habit of mind in the midst of all the provocations of his strenuous ministry, his majestic calmness in the presence of the Sanhedrin and the Roman governor when on trial for his life, are some of the evidences that justify the belief, that, while yet on earth in the body, he was a resident of heaven in the Spirit.

After his brief but far-reaching earthly ministry, Jesus went back to his home in heaven. This he foretold in various terms on several occasions. When the hostile Pharisees sent officers to arrest him, he said: "Yet a little while I am with you, and I go unto him that sent me" (John vii. 33). In similar vein he told his disciples on the evening before his death: "I leave the world, and go unto the Father" (John xvi. 28). The purpose of his going away he announced to them in the same familiar talk: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2). In the prayer that followed this communication he said to the Father: "Now I come to thee" (John xvii. 13). On the morning of his resurrection he said to Mary Magdalene, who had been weeping at the open sepulcher, but was now rejoicing to find her Lord again: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father; but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx.

17). In the evening of the same day as in disguise he was talking with Cleopas and another disciple who were walking sorrowfully toward the village of Emmaus: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26). Add to these declarations of his purpose the assurance that he gave the penitent robber who suffered crucifixion by his side: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). The passages quoted above clearly reveal the consciousness of Jesus, and show that he knew his home to be in heaven with the Father. Shortly after saying these things he vanished from the scenes of his earthly ministry. The Evangelists who wrote the story of his life recorded their explanation of his departure from earth in these words: "As they [the disciples] were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts i. 9). "He led them out until they were over against Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark xvi. 19). This is the only rational explanation of

his disappearance from among men, and upon the truth of it we may confidently rely.

While Heaven is the permanent home of the Saviour, he foretold on various occasions a return to earth, which is usually spoken of as the Second Coming of Christ. A few days before his transfiguration he said to the disciples: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matt. xvi. 27). At his so-called trial by the Sanhedrin, when the high priest put Jesus on oath and said, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God," the prisoner calmly replied in the affirmative and solemnly added: "I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). To his own disciples he had given the gracious assurance only a few hours before the trial: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3). Upon another occasion he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, spoke to them of the necessity of self-denial, and added these words of warning: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be

ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark viii. 38). In this connection should be read and pondered the description of the Final Judgment as recorded by Matthew (xxv. 31–46), in which Jesus reaffirms his purpose to come again from heaven to earth, and sets forth the purpose and results of his coming.

If the scope of this book included an exposition of the teachings of Paul and the writers of the other Epistles upon the subject under consideration, much more might be said concerning the relationship of Christ to heaven. But it is here intended to set forth only what Jesus said about heaven, leaving the reader to make his own investigation into the teachings of the inspired men who wrote the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation. The field is an inviting one, and will repay careful exploration. Suffice it here to say, by way of summing up, that Jesus affirmed his own preëxistence with the Father, his coming down from heaven as the Father's representative, his spiritual residence in heaven while on earth in the body, his return to the Father after his earthly mission was completed, and his purpose to come again from Heaven, to judge the righteous and receive them to himself, and to judge the wicked and dismiss them to the place of retribution for which alone they are prepared. Good and wise

men have differed in the details of their interpretation of these recorded words of Christ; but we may safely feel that we have in substance, if not in every minute detail, what the Master said about heaven as his own eternal home.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN

IN the four Gospels Jesus is nowhere represented as affirming directly the existence of angels and their residence in heaven, but in many of his recorded sayings there is recognition of these facts as familiar in the thought of those to whom he spoke. The Old Testament Scriptures had familiarized the people of his day with the thought of angels as superior beings employed in the service of God for the execution of his purposes among men. Accordingly the existence and heavenly residence of angels are taken for granted, not only in the Gospels, but throughout the New Testament writings.

As to the moral character of angels, the Saviour calls them "holy," as both Mark and Luke record in almost identical words: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels" (Mark viii. 38; Luke ix. 26). They are holy, not because they never had any opportunity of doing wrong, but because, unlike man, they stood the test of probation, chose to obey God rather than yield to temptation, and thus had their original in-

nocence transformed into holiness. As holy beings they are associates and ministers of the holy God.

That the angels yield prompt and glad obedience to the will of their Maker is implied in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. vi. 10). Jesus here implies that the inhabitants of heaven, which of course include the angels, do the Father's will, and that they do it with such fidelity and completeness as to make them fit examples of conduct for men who dwell upon earth. If an ancient psalmist could say: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 8), even more joyously can the unfallen angels around the throne affirm in song and in deeds their perfect loyalty to the will of their God and King.

Jesus in various utterances, as recorded by the Evangelists, affirms that the angels are subject to him. They were and still are what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls "ministering spirits," as various passages will show. At the very beginning of his ministry Jesus told Nathanael of Cana, and others who stood by, that angels were intimately associated with him in bringing the gifts of heaven to the inhabitants of earth: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon

the Son of man" (John i. 51). The form of the affirmation is suggested, no doubt, by the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 12); but the underlying truth that Jesus here taught is the intercourse between God and his human children which the atoning Son has made real by his mediation, and in which the angels are his ready assistants and messengers. As Frederic Louis Godet well puts it: "The angels are here presented by Jesus as an army grouped around their chief, the Son of man, who says to one, *Go*, and to another, *Do this*. These servants ascend first, to seek power in the presence of God; afterwards, they descend again to accomplish the work" (Com. on John, *in loc.*).[1] Dr. Lyman Abbott gives his interpretation of this passage as follows: "Christ opened the communication between earth and heaven; manifested that fact by the angelic appearances which accompanied his coming, his presence, and his departure; still manifests it, by the spiritual blessings which he constantly confers in answer to the prayers of his people; and will finally manifest it yet more gloriously when he comes to take possession of his established kingdom, with his holy angels with him. The past and present fulfillments of this prophecy are but fragmentary and imperfect. The final

[1]Funk & Wagnalls, publishers, New York.

and perfect fulfillment awaits us in the future" (Com. on John, *in loc.*).[2]

That the angels are subject to Christ is evidenced by the words he spoke to Simon Peter, who had just struck off the ear of a servant of the high priest in attempting to prevent the arrest of Jesus that night in Gethsemane. The rash act of his disciple was rebuked by the Master in these stern words: "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 52, 53). The implication is unmistakable that the angels of heaven were ever ready to come to the side of Jesus with all their loyalty and strength, to render him service when he so desired.

As servants of Christ the angels will attend him when he shall come in his glory to judge the nations (Matt. xxv. 31, 32). "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 31). In explaining to his disciples the Parable of the Tares, Jesus said: "The harvest is the end of the

[2]A. S. Barnes & Company, publishers, New York.

world; and the reapers are angels. . . . The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. xiii. 39, 41, 42). These utterances of Jesus abundantly sustain the assertion that the angels of heaven were at his command in the days of his earthly ministry, and that they are still subject to him, ready to do his bidding at the end of the world and beyond in all the ages to come.

Jesus taught also that angels are guardians of little children and of childlike disciples. The Apostles were inclined to repel those who brought their little ones to him for a blessing; but he rebuked the objectors, told them that his kingdom belonged to such as these, and warned them against underrating the lowly and obscure: "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt xviii. 10). From this passage chiefly has arisen the doctrine of guardian angels, concerning which various views are held. Dr. John A. Broadus says: "There is in this no sufficient warrant for the popular notion of 'guardian angels,' one angel especially assigned to each individual; it is simply said of believers as a class that there are angels which are *their* angels; but there is

nothing here or elsewhere to show that one angel has special charge of one believer. . . . However humble in the estimation of worldly men, believers have angels as their attendants, sent forth to serve God for their benefit (Heb. i. 14), and these angels of theirs enjoy in heaven the highest dignity and consideration, like persons admitted to the very presence of a monarch, and allowed, not once, but continually, to behold his face. . . . It cannot be positively asserted that the idea of guardian angels is an error, but there is no Scripture which proves it true, and passages which merely *might* be understood that way do not suffice for the basis of a doctrine" (Com. on Matt., *in loc.*).[3] On the other hand, the great exegete Meyer comments on this passage in these plain words, "The belief that every individual has a guardian angel . . . is here confirmed by Jesus"; and he further says that these angels always behold the Father's face, "inasmuch as they are ever in immediate proximity to God's glory in heaven, and therefore belong to the highest order of angels" (Com. on Matt., *in loc.*).[4] With this view Dr. Lyman Abbott is in substantial accord. He says that "their angels" here means

[3]American Commentary on Matthew, by Dr. John A. Broadus; American Baptist Publication Society, publishers, Philadelphia.

[4]Funk & Wagnalls, publishers, New York.

their guardian angels. "Here are intended the celestial messengers who are allotted as the special guardians of God's children. Not their departed spirits after death, but their guardian angels while they live, are represented as nearest the throne. That is, they always have immediate and direct access to God. The picture is interpreted by the usage of courts, where certain special favorite officers always have access to the throne. Without pressing the language, which is seemingly metaphorical, as all language descriptive of the spiritual world must be, it evidently implies the doctrine of guardian angels—that angels are not only in general the ministering servants of God, but that special angels are allotted as the special guardians and attendants of individuals; and that the weakest and feeblest of God's flock, not merely the children, but the little ones in intellectual and spiritual power and in ecclesiastical position and earthly honor, have the readiest and nearest access to God" (Com. on Matt.).[5] In this case, as in others where eminent expositors express different opinions, it becomes the rest of us to avoid dogmatism and judge for ourselves in the light of all the knowledge that we may possess.

In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

[5]A. S. Barnes & Company, publishers, New York.

there is at least a strong suggestion that angels include in their functions as "ministering spirits" the conveying those who die in the Lord to their home in heaven. Jesus says of Lazarus: "It came to pass that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke xvi. 22). The drapery is figurative, of course, heaven being presented to the imagination as a banquet hall, where host and guests recline on couches, with Abraham, father of the faithful, in the chief place, and the former beggar lying next to him, with his head resting close to the patriarch's breast. Such a figure made strong appeal to the Jewish mind. To us, of course, Abraham's bosom means Paradise, or heaven; and the fact that angels are shown as the agents who carried Lazarus home makes it probable, if not certain, that they are appointed to render a similar service to every dying saint. This thought has gladdened the hearts of many weary pilgrims, and one of them who lived more than threescore years ago expressed his feelings in the well-known lines:

"I've almost gained my heavenly home,
My spirit loudly sings;
Thy holy ones, behold, they come!
I hear the noise of wings.

"O come, angel band,
Come and around me stand;
O bear me away on your snowy wings
To my immortal home."

Jesus explicitly teaches also that the angels in heaven are acquainted with at least some of the events that are taking place in this world, that they are deeply interested in human affairs, and that their hearts rejoice whenever a sinful soul on earth renounces his sins and seeks pardon and cleansing in the mercy of God. In the twin Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin he says, "There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance"; and he expressly includes the angels in the further saying: "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 7, 10). No doubt, this joy is shared by redeemed saints in heaven, if they too are cognizant of what is occurring here below. But it is not revealed in the words of Jesus whether or not they are included in this knowledge and the resultant joy. Of angelic sympathy and gladness, however, we are sure.

But the knowledge of the angels is limited, for they are finite. Concerning the Second Coming of the Son of man, Jesus said: "Of that

day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). While inhabiting a human body even Christ was to some extent limited in knowledge; the angels, who are created beings, cannot be omniscient. Like ourselves, they must be taught.

CHAPTER VII

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN: CERTAINTY

THAT Christ's true disciples are destined to dwell in Heaven eternally is just as certain as it is that he himself will be there. In many terms and at various times he gave that assurance in the teachings which the Evangelists recorded. When the seventy heralds of the kingdom of God that he sent forth had completed their mission and returned to him with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name," he told them not to let their chief gladness be inspired by the subjection of evil spirits, but to "rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 17–20). The figure is that of a register in which are enrolled the names of those who are already citizens of heaven, even while they yet dwell upon earth. Both in the Old Testament and in the New the figure of a heavenly register is repeatedly used. "Our citizenship is in heaven," says the Apostle Paul (Phil. iii. 20), and while the saint is a sojourner in this world his true home is above and his name is on the register of the Heavenly Commonwealth. Accordingly, in the same Epistle, Paul speaks of certain godly women and other "fellow work-

ers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. iv. 3). In similar phrase the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews alludes to "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23). And in the Revelation of John (xxi. 27) it is declared that nothing unclean shall enter the Heavenly City, "but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." Let it be said again that this is a figure of speech, for only thus can spiritual realities be conveyed to our dull human comprehension. But at the same time it should be carefully noted that there is a divine reality behind the figure, which is that the saints of God, Christ's true disciples, are set apart in this world to a glorious destiny in the world to come. To use the words of the Apostle Peter, there is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. i. 4, 5).

That heaven is assured to those who are found at last with names inscribed in the Book of Life is implied in the assurance of Jesus to his disciples as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount. Announcing the Beatitude of those who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake," he said to all such: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted

they the prophets that were before you" (Matt. v. 10–12). Here the Master not only affirms the heavenly residence of his followers in the future life, but tells them explicitly that they shall find there a reward for all their hardships and fidelity in this world, and that the reward shall be great. Something of the nature and extent of that "reward" is indicated in the Parable of the Talents, where the "good and faithful servant" who had been "faithful over a few things" was promoted to a more important trust, and told, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." This reward was bestowed by the master of those servants, not only upon the one who improved five talents, but also and equally upon him who had improved two talents (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). Fidelity to trusts committed, not the largeness of results attained, was the basis and measure of the reward. The "lord" in the Parable represents the Lord of the Kingdom of Heaven; and Jesus here meant to teach that his saints are to be rewarded in heaven for their fidelity upon earth, and that the reward of each will be great and satisfying.

This great reward is presented in another form by our Lord in the closing sentence of his description of the Judgment scene as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew (xxv. 46): Speaking of the wicked, whose doom is pro-

nounced by the King, it is said, "These shall go away into eternal punishment"; but the destiny of those on the right hand is declared in the words, "but the righteous into eternal life." To similar purpose, but in somewhat different terms, Jesus characterized this great reward in an assurance given to Peter and the other disciples. Peter had somewhat indelicately alluded to the sacrifices that he and the others had made in order to follow him, and the Master's reply was: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life" (Luke xviii. 28–30). The full contents of that familiar phrase "eternal life" no human mind and heart can compass in this world, and eternity itself may not suffice to reveal all its glories. Let it be said with emphasis, however, that its meaning is not chiefly an affirmation of everlasting duration, though that is certainly implied. Eternal life is chiefly a thing of quality, and not of quantity or duration. Its leading characteristic seems to be intimate and progressive fellowship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ his Son, as expressed by Jesus himself in the prayer which he uttered on the evening before his death: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify

thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 1–3). In our present state of knowledge it must content us to know that there is great reward in heaven for those who are faithful to the Master on earth, and that a chief element of that reward will be life eternal with all the glories that the term implies.

When is that great reward to begin? Is there to be a long interval between the fidelity of the earthly life and the glory of the life to come? Shall the saints be consigned to some shadowy place called Sheol, or Hades, to grope their way in semi-darkness, as many of the ancients and some of the Old Testament writers imagined? Or must the soul along with the body be interred in the grave and remain unconscious until the Last Day? Such ideas have been advocated by good people. Be sure that this is not the teaching of Jesus. On the cross amid the agonies of crucifixion he shed light upon the destiny of the repentant and trusting soul. When one of the robbers who were crucified with him implored, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," the dying but omnipotent Saviour replied: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 42,

43). In the vocabulary of Jesus Paradise was identical with heaven. The inference is valid, if not irresistible, that the dying saint enters heaven immediately and that the great reward begins at once. It seems to me that these things are as certain as that Christ is true.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN: DIGNITY

THE great reward which Jesus assured his disciples was to be their portion in heaven, and which extends to all his saints in every age and clime, implies certain dignities and honors that may well claim our attention just here.

One of these dignities is equality with the angels who never sinned, and whose privilege it is to behold the Father's face and go forth to do his will. Jesus told the Sadducees who were trying to entrap him with a question about the resurrection, that they were in error because they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God. In the resurrection, he said, the righteous will not be bound by the conditions that marked their earthly lives, but will be "equal unto the angels" (Luke xx. 36; Matt. xxii. 30; Mark xii. 25). This does not mean, it is worth while to say, that saints when they reach heaven will become angels, thus losing something of their human identity. The once-popular Sunday school song, "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand," may have voiced a worthy aspiration, but there is no warrant in the teachings of Jesus to show that the conception is accurate. "As the angels," or "equal

unto the angels," is what the Master said. He specified two things in which this equality with angels consists: one of them, that there is no more death for them, and the other, that the marriage relation will have ceased forever. We have seen in a previous chapter that the angels are highly exalted. Jesus said they are "holy"; that they are his trusted agents in conveying heavenly gifts to mankind; that they will attend him when he comes to judge the nations; that they are intrusted with the guardianship of little children and adults of childlike spirit; that they are filled with joy when sinners repent; in short, his words imply that angels are holy and happy in communion with God and one another, and honored with the privilege of ministration to God's earthly children in their times of need. It is evident, therefore, that the saints will be clothed with honors beyond our present ability to conceive, when they take their places in the celestial world as the peers and companions of angels.

In connection with his declaration to the Sadducees, as quoted above, Jesus made another affirmation—that "they who are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, . . . are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 35, 36). The meaning seems to be that the sonship which existed while the saint was still upon

earth, and which enabled him to say, "Abba, Father," to God, is exalted into some higher degree in heaven as he takes his place in the ranks of the glorified. Being now "sons of the resurrection," having passed through the transformation which the resurrection with its spiritual body effects, the saints are endued with a dignity of divine sonship that was impossible to them while still hampered by earthly conditions. As sons of the resurrection and children of God in heaven, the saints will realize as never before the fullness of meaning embraced in that saying of Jesus on a crucial occasion: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 50). While this close relation between the Son of God and his true disciples is a glorious fact even here on earth, its glory is enhanced by the resurrection experience which the saint has passed through in fellowship with his Saviour. So that, when the Risen Christ shall take the risen saint by the hand and with a smile of welcome say, "My brother, my sister, my mother," a new and brighter element will be added to that heavenly relationship.

This exalted relation will receive public recognition, according to these words of Jesus: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32). And

if in the Father's presence this great confession is made, then it will be made also in the presence of angels, archangels, glorified saints of all the ages from Abel to the last one who entered the gates of Paradise, and of all the holy and happy intelligences of the universe. Is there any dignity higher than this?

Yes, there seems to be a further exaltation implied in certain other sayings of Jesus. On a certain occasion late in his earthly ministry, when a contention had arisen among his disciples as to which of them was accounted to be greatest, he explained to them patiently that greatness in his kingdom was based upon humble service, and then assured them that, as they had continued with him in his temptations, he would reward them with appropriate honors: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 29, 30). Substantially the same promise was given in reply to Peter's question: "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 27, 28).

Note in this connection the invitation extended to those on the right hand of the Judge in the scene depicted by Jesus in Matthew's record: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). In these passages Jesus declares not merely that his disciples will be admitted to share as subjects in his heavenly kingdom, but also that they are to possess great dignity and authority. It has been remarked by a wise interpreter that while the promise of sitting upon thrones and exercising the functions of judge is upon its face a personal promise to the disciples who were with Jesus at the time, yet "elsewhere are to be found promises, apparently to all the saints, of sharing with Christ, in a manner which is not explained, in his office of Judge and King." The same writer adds this conclusion: "Whatever else this promise may mean, it certainly imports the possession of a celestial office of great trust, dignity, and importance" (Lyman Abbott, Com. on Matt.).[1] A reminiscence of this great promise may be found in Paul's appeal to the Christians of the Corinthian Church, who were suing one another in the heathen courts: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the

[1] A. S. Barnes & Company, publishers, New York.

world? and if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). In our necessary ignorance of the details of the heavenly life it is impossible to give a more definite judgment of what is implied in the kingdom, thrones, and judicial powers that Jesus promises in these passages. We can only say, with the writer quoted above, that they certainly mean the possession of a celestial office of great trust, dignity, and importance. What this office includes of dignity and honor, as well as of responsibility, will be revealed to each of us when "this mortal shall have put on immortality."

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," said Jesus in his interpretation of his Parable of the Tares of the Field (Matt. xiii. 43). He had just said that "in the end of the world the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." And in sharp contrast with this gloom and anguish he places the entrancing picture of a great company of redeemed saints, whose faces are shining like the sun and whose garments are

luminous as the light. We are reminded of the glory of the Transfiguration, in which the sublime figure of the Son of God appeared to the three disciples through the surrounding darkness—"his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light" (Matt. xvii. 2). And we remember the words of the Beloved Disciple: "Now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John iii. 2). In this world the true disciples of the lowly Nazarene are often obscure and but little appreciated by those who are striving after wealth and carnal pleasure. But in the world to come they shall be forever separate from all evil associations and allurements, their real worth will be manifest to rejoicing angels, and as children of their Father they will "shine forth as the sun," whose radiant beams shall nevermore be dimmed. Surely these coming honors and dignities that are reserved for the saints in heaven may well cheer their hearts while still in the house of their pilgrimage.

CHAPTER IX

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN: FELLOWSHIP

AS social beings the followers of Christ have found one of their richest privileges on earth to be association with their fellow Christians and communion by faith with their unseen but adored Redeemer. That the "fellowship of kindred minds" will form a chief element in the bliss of the saints in heaven is only what we are warranted in expecting from the foreglimpses that come to us here in the flesh.

Accordingly, it is no surprise to a child of God when he reads such words as these that fell from the lips of Jesus: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be" (John xii. 26). Certain Greeks desired to see him during Passover week in Jerusalem, and he made their visit an occasion for renewing his teaching about self-denial and holy service. The point to be noted here is that he who faithfully follows the Master in this life will continue to follow him in the life to come—that the fellowship of earthly service will merge into the fellowship of heavenly communion. This great fact of fellowship with the Saviour in heaven is expressed in the most explicit manner in those classic words that have

made music in the hearts and lives of his disciples throughout all the Christian centuries: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). On the same occasion—the evening before his death—he uttered this wish in the prayer which reveals his innermost heart: "Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). Dwell upon these glorious words: "Where I am, there shall my servant be; there ye may be also; that they may behold my glory." Eternal fellowship with Him who loved us and gave Himself up for us! The privilege of looking into the face of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person! To hear the entrancing music of His voice, who said to the toil-worn and heavy-laden: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest!" To behold His glory, which the Father has given to His well-beloved Son, and to share that glory through eternal ages, with no fear of change, no dread of sin, no apprehension of

death! Truly, as Jesus said: "Great is your reward in heaven."

Along with this supreme fellowship with Christ we are permitted to anticipate association with our fellow saints in glory. How great is their number no mind of man can compute. They have been gathering up there from the days of righteous Abel until now. Think of knowing and associating in heaven with Enoch, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and his fellow prophets, John the Baptist, John the Beloved Disciple, Peter, Paul, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Polycarp, and a myriad of saints who followed these illustrious ones in later years. Imagine the fellowship of those godly men and women, whose memoirs we have read and whose characters we have admired and loved, though we never beheld their faces nor heard the tones of their voices. Picture the joy of clasping hands with the pastor who ministered to your spiritual needs long ago, the teacher who led your young footsteps upward in the Sunday school, the comrades who labored by your side for years and then preceded you to the land of rest and reward. What pleasures await the child of God in realizing these anticipations!

Our own most intimate ones, too—those whom we "loved long since and lost awhile" —father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, son, daughter, and others who were bound to

us on earth by closest ties of love and confidence! Think of the reunion with them in the home where no prospect of separation will shadow the perfect joy of fellowship! Is all this in store for the faithful disciples of Jesus? The whole teaching of the Master implies it, even if there is no explicit declaration of it in his recorded words. A careful and candid reading of the four Gospels will assure any inquirer that the reunion of saints with their loved ones who died in the faith and hope of salvation through Christ is as certain as the promises of God.

"Shall we know each other there?" is a question often asked by those who have suffered keen bereavement. Certainly we shall—why not? It is implied in the very nature of things. Will heaven bring us into a state of knowledge inferior to our intelligence on earth? Could there be fellowship without recognition? And is not fellowship a cardinal element of that heaven which Jesus reveals? It would seem that no doubt of the recognition of friends in the future life of the saints should ever have arisen at all, in view of the implications of Scripture and the dictates of sound reason. True, there are some shadows that we cannot brush away in the present imperfect state of our knowledge —as, for example, the apprehension in some minds that happiness would be impossible even in heaven, if recognition of our saved friends

should cause us to miss other friends who were not there. The solution of this doubt is in the mind of our loving Father, and there it must be left until he shall choose to make it known. Meanwhile, we are free to believe most heartily in heavenly recognition, because the opposite supposition is repugnant to all our social instincts, and also because it is negatived by the whole tenor of New Testament teaching. Let us join the Apostle Paul in his confession of faith: "Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Does heavenly recognition involve the resumption of family relationships, especially the marriage tie? Not so. Jesus teaches in explicit terms that these ties, at least in their physical features, are unknown in heaven. He said: "The sons of this world marry, and are given in marriage; but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: for neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 34–36; Matt. xxii. 30; Mark xii. 25). The Master's meaning is well interpreted by Dr. Lyman Abbott, who says: "This declaration does not imply that the angels are the

spirits of the departed; on the contrary, it discriminates between the two, for it compares the one to the other. Nor does it imply that there is no recognition of friends in heaven and no perpetuation of friendship. Nor does it involve the literal resurrection of the earthly body; on the contrary, it implies a radical difference between the celestial and the terrestrial body. (Compare 1 Cor. xv. 42–44, 50.) But Christ declares that as in heaven there will be no more death (Luke xx. 36), so there will be no succession and renewal of life, which is the main object of marriage; hence the physical relations of marriage will not continue to exist" (Com. on Matt.)[1] Dr. John A. Broadus agrees with this view in substance, but is somewhat more explicit. He says: "There is nothing in this statement (of Christ) to forbid the persuasion, elsewhere countenanced in Scripture, that the relations of earthly life will be remembered in the future state, the persons recognized, and special affections cherished with delight; and we can imagine that exalted and spiritualized conjugal affections may then and there exist toward more persons than one. The idea is hard to accept now, only because we do not realize how great changes of feeling will accompany existence in the glorified body (1 Cor. xv. 44; Phil. iii. 21). In heaven, the love of

[1]A. S. Barnes & Company, publishers, New York.

two that were successive husbands may be as little mutually exclusive as the love of two children or two sisters, and yet be intense, peculiar, and delightful. This is another of those sayings by which our Lord at one stroke cut into the heart of some difficulty, and laid it open" (Commentary on Matt.).[2] Let the interpretations of these wise men be taken for what they are worth; the present writer has nothing better to present.

It is legitimate to inquire, in connection with the fellowship of the saints in heaven, whether it includes a vision of the Father as well as familiar communion with the Saviour, the angels, and spirits of just men made perfect. Will the Father manifest himself to his human children in the future state, apart from the revelation which he makes through the Son, and will the saints be rewarded with what has been called "the Beatific Vision," a direct and vivid disclosure of the Father's face? There are some sayings of Scripture which on the surface appear to require a negative answer, while others appear to favor the affirmative. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," may mean a vision of the Father up there, as well as a spiritual apprehension of him down here. And if in heaven the guardian angels of God's little

[2]American Baptist Publication Society, publishers, Philadelphia; quoted by permission.

ones do always behold the Father's face, why not also the saints whom the Son shall confess to the Father in the presence of the angels? "Coming the vision of God; coming my bloom and my power!" So sang one of his saints in triumph of faith, and so it is our privilege to voice our glad anticipation of the fellowship above.

CHAPTER X

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN: EXPERIENCE

INTERWOVEN with the dignities that the saints in heaven shall receive and the fellowship they shall enjoy are certain experiences which Jesus promised his disciples, that call for special notice in addition to allusions to them that have already been made.

One of those experiences foretold in explicit terms by Him is that of immortality. In his Gospel Luke has preserved for us a saying of Jesus that does not appear in the other Synoptics. Refuting the error of the Sadducees, who sought to confound him with a hard question about marriage in the life to come, Jesus replied that "they who are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage." And then he adds the priceless assurance: "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 35, 36). Here is a definite pledge of immortal life to all who are numbered among the true disciples of Jesus. When once they have passed through the gates of death into the heavenly

world, they can never die again, but are deathless like the unfallen angels.

It is difficult to realize in our present limited condition what a relief it will be to enter upon a state and reside in a place from which death in every form is absolutely excluded. We are so familiar with sickness, death, funerals, burials, with all their attendant heartbreak, that imagination staggers in the attempt to conceive a condition in which none of these gloomy objects can ever have place. The dread of death is the cause of many of the densest shadows that darken our earthly pathway. Even the very best of God's saints look forward to the experience of dissolution with feelings of discomfort, although they have no reason to fear what lies beyond the grave. Truly does the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 15) speak of them "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"; for, indeed, this fear enslaves our humanity with a bondage as cruel as it is universal. But the same writer in connection with these words lays emphasis upon the cheering fact that Christ partook of our human nature and submitted to die in our behalf, "that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death" were thus enslaved. And now that Christ has risen from

the dead, to die no more, his word to all his true disciples is: "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). This assurance of immortality in union with the Lord finds its worthy echo from the Isle of Patmos in the words that John heard from "a great voice out of heaven": "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4).

The passage just quoted leads us to speak more particularly of the experience of comfort which the saints in heaven will enjoy. Not only is death excluded from heaven, but sorrow, pain, tears, and all other discomforts are forever shut out. The whole tenor of Christ's teaching, as recorded in the Gospels, gives assurance of this heavenly comfort. There is more than a hint of it in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus where Abraham is represented as telling the man whose cry for help had reached him across the "great gulf" that separated between Paradise and the place of torment, that while he, the once rich man, was in anguish, Lazarus, the poor afflicted beggar, whom the angels had conveyed to the celestial banquet hall, was the subject of loving comfort. "Now here he is comforted," said Father Abraham. Taken in connection with other sayings of Jesus, this glimpse of the

life above is full of cheer to those who are in need of heavenly comfort. The mission of Jesus to this world was largely one of comfort to the distressed. One of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount declares: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4). "Be of good comfort," was a favorite expression of his, when the afflicted appealed to him for help. "I will not leave you comfortless," was an assurance which he gave his disciples when they were dismayed at the news of his approaching departure from them. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth," was the promise with which he consoled them for the loss to be occasioned by his own withdrawal. It is in harmony with all these words of the Master concerning the comfort that His people should have on earth under the ministrations of the Divine Spirit, that the heavenly life is represented as free from all that which might cause unhappiness, and full of that comfort which all weary souls covet but never experience in perfection here below. It is no matter of surprise that we find in the writings of Paul and the other Apostolic authors many echoes of the teachings of the Master upon this subject.

Akin to this experience of comfort in the heavenly life is that of joy, which may be viewed

as comfort intensified. In the Parable of the Talents (Matt. xxv.), Jesus represents the lord of the servants as saying to the one who had been faithful in using his capital of five talents: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The same commendation with its gracious invitation is given to the servant who had improved the two talents intrusted to him. What was meant by entering into the joy of his lord is left to our imagination to conceive. No doubt, it meant honor, closer fellowship with the master, probably a banquet and feasting; at all events, it indicated a promotion that would be fraught with joy. Let it be remembered that this "lord" in the parable is meant to represent our Lord and Master, who will reward each of his faithful servants with commendation of his faithfulness, promotion to a place of greater dignity and responsibility, and admission into closer fellowship with himself. To disciples of Jesus the invitation of their Master, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," will mean introduction to an experience of bliss beyond all power of human mind and heart to conceive until this mortal shall have put on immortality. On the lips of Jesus the words "my joy" was an expression that his disciples often heard and sometimes recorded. For

example, he said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John xv. 11). And in his prayer on the evening before his death he said to the Father: "Now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they (the disciples) may have my joy made full in themselves" (John xvii. 13). The joy which filled the heart of Jesus, even while burdened with the sins and sorrows of the people about him, found its source in conscious purity from personal sin and fault, unbroken fellowship with the Father whose beloved Son and Representative he was, and the opportunity and power of service to the souls and bodies of men which his earthly life afforded him. It was the joy of holiness, of love to God and man, of opening up before despairing humanity the way of salvation from all sin and ultimately from all evil whatsoever.

When he finished the work which the Father had given him to do on earth, and ascended to his mediatorial seat at the Father's right hand in heaven, his joy was intensified, no doubt, as he found his own purity reflected in all the happy spirits about him, as communion with the Father and with saints and angels became more vivid than had been possible while enveloped in the shadows of his earthly experience, and as he saw the auspicious beginnings and progress of

that Kingdom which he had given his life to introduce and establish on earth. This in part is what is included in the expression, "the joy of thy Lord."

To participate in this joy of the Saviour in heaven will be the crowning experience of the the saints. Theirs will be the joy of conscious purity also, and to them will it be given to have unbroken and satisfying fellowship with Christ and the Father whose love gave Christ to mankind, and communion with unfallen angels, as well as with a great multitude of noble human souls from all lands and every age. To them will come also the gladness of knowing that the good work which they did on earth in the Master's name for the benefit of their fellow men abides in the lives of many, and will go on multiplying in gracious and redeeming influences through all the ages to come. Said Jesus to his disciples on one occasion: "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." If the foreknowledge that our names have been entered upon the celestial register as citizens of heaven is a matter of rejoicing, how much greater will be the joy when we come into the fullness of that citizenship, and take our places in that innumerable company who, having come out of great tribulation, "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14).

CHAPTER XI

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN: OCCUPATION

IT seems somewhat remarkable that there is no explicit word of Jesus recorded in the Gospels concerning the occupations, or employments, of redeemed souls in heaven. There are utterances of his that set forth definitely the certainty of the blessed hereafter, the dignities and honors that the saints are to receive, the fellowship they are destined to enjoy, and the blessed experiences of comfort and gladness that are reserved for them in the Celestial City. But concerning the employments and activities of the saints in glory there is no plain affirmation in the recorded sayings of Jesus, and we are left to gather what light we can from his general teachings with their apparent implications. One of his utterances that may serve us here is a sentence in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. vi. 10). Here it is plainly implied that the Heavenly Father's will is done in heaven, and this means, of course, that it is done by saints as well as by the unfallen angels. It is certain that in heaven all the inhabitants do the will of God promptly, gladly, and with all possible efficiency.

When we try to specify what the will of the

Father is in connection with the employments of the saints above, it is possible to obtain some light from the Master's words elsewhere. For example, in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Jesus represents Abraham as telling the former rich man in the other world: "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish" (Luke xvi. 25). As the former beggar is here pictured enjoying a banquet in company with Abraham in Paradise, it is inevitable that his condition should be associated with the idea of Rest. So that we may take our Lord's word here as at least a strong hint that one of the occupations of the saints in glory will be to rest from the toil and weariness of their earthly life. This thought receives explicit and repeated confirmation in other parts of the New Testament. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in delineating the experience of the toil-worn Israelites in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, concludes with this general assurance: "There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). This rest is to be spiritual as well as physical, and its sphere is heaven rather than earth. John upon the island of Patmos heard a voice from heaven saying: "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea,

saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them" (Rev. xiv. 13). In view of passages like these it is not a perversion of the Master's meaning to believe that the final rest of heaven is included in his great invitation and promise: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 29). The rest that Jesus imparts to earth's weary ones who trust in him is a rest that begins and develops in the life that now is, and finds its complete fulfillment in the life to come.

It is very certain that the element of Worship will enter largely into the occupations of the saints in heaven. It will be no hardship for the redeemed to vary the rest of heaven with frequent seasons of adoration and praise to the Father and his redeeming Son. Indeed it is certain that a deep current of joyous worship will flow continually in the hearts of the saints, even while resting quietly from their labors. As to worship as one of the occupations of the dwellers in heaven, we have a hint in the song of the angels who saluted the ears of the shepherds on the night that Jesus was born with their strains of praise: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke ii. 14). But it

is in the Revelation of John that we find vivid pictures of heaven as a place of worship, in which both saints and angels participate. Of the various passages, this one may be quoted as representative of all: "After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. vii. 9–12). Such a picture is adapted to fire one's imagination, and to quicken his desire to join that happy throng whose praises mingle with the anthems of the angels in the presence of the eternal throne.

There is ample reason to believe that one of the chief occupations of the saints in heaven will be the rendering of Service to others according to plans that the Infinite Father will reveal in the onward progress of the ages. "Thy will be done in heaven" can surely mean no less

than this, for in the earthly life God's servants do his will best when they are best serving their fellows. Is it not true also, that equality with the angels which Jesus affirms of the saints in glory will include fellowship with them in useful service, as well as in rendering worship to God and the Lamb? This seems to be a fair inference, and it opens up an inviting vista of happy occupation for Christ's redeemed. Another significant utterance of Jesus is recorded by John in connection with the visit of certain Greeks during Passion Week: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be" (John xii. 26). Here there seems to be an intimation that those who follow Jesus and serve him in this world shall not only be with him in heaven but shall serve him there also. Death shall have no power to put an end to, nor even seriously interrupt, the glad service that the disciple shall render his beloved Master. "O death, where is thy victory?" There is a glad recognition of this heavenly service in the Revelation of St. John. In his vision of the great multitude before the throne, John heard one of the elders say to him: "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple"

(Rev. vii. 14, 15). A kindred passage is in Revelation xxii. 3: "And there shall be no curse any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face."

This view of heaven as a place of holy service is expressed in various ways by eminent scholars. Dr. A. H. Strong says: "The representation of heaven as a city seems intended to suggest intensity of life, variety of occupation, and closeness of relation to others. . . . Heaven will involve rest from defective physical organization and surroundings, as well as from the remains of evil in our hearts. It will be a rest consistent with service, an activity without weariness, a service which is perfect freedom" ("Systematic Theology," p. 585).[1] Another writer says: "We must suppose, then, that there will be, even in the heavenly world, a diversity of tastes, of labors, and of employments, and that to one person this, to another that field, in the boundless kingdom of truth and of useful occupation, will be assigned for his cultivation, according to his peculiar powers, qualifications, and tastes" (McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia, Vol. IV, p. 127).[2] And that most winsome of theologians, Dr.

[1]American Baptist Publication Society, publishers, Philadelphia.

[2]Harper & Brothers, publishers, New York.

William Newton Clarke, says concerning the soul that has attained to the heavenly life: "He is under the most holy and inspiring influences, where all that is best in him is constantly helped to increase. All characteristic activities of the Christ-like life are open to him. The grade of being in which he finds himself is higher than that which he has left, and fresh opportunities of holy service and of holy growth and blessedness are constantly set before him. He is in the life that he loves and ought to love, and the course of free and Godlike activity stretches on before him without end. This is the life that is life indeed, laid hold of on earth, but experienced in its fullness only in the world beyond" ("Outline of Christian Theology," pp. 469–472).[3] In this connection Dr. Clarke makes the deeply impressive suggestion that a large part of the service that mature saints will be appointed to render in heaven may be in the form of instruction and help to immature souls of children and perhaps others, who were unable to receive it on earth. He says: "Infants cannot grow to maturity and attain to character in any world without living a life of free and responsible action. It is a vast enrichment of our ideas of that world to think of innumerable youthful spirits as there opening for the first time to the knowledge and love of the Heavenly Father

[3]Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers, New York.

and growing into his likeness. Moreover, if to so large a part of those who are with Christ life is necessarily educational, opportunities of usefulness and help must open in inexhaustible abundance to those who are further advanced in holy experience, and the heavenly life must be intensely active and interesting."[4] The importance of this suggestion relating to the occupations of the saints in heaven can hardly be overestimated.

In addition to the elements of rest and worship and service that enter largely into the heavenly life, there are strong intimations in certain words of Jesus that the saints will exercise a kind of authority, including judicial functions, in the eternal world. In a previous chapter something was said of the dignities of the redeemed in glory, and this passage, among others, was quoted: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, . . . and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 29, 30). This was said by the Master to the apostles on the occasion of the Last Passover; but that the promise was intended to apply to all the saints is intimated in various other passages of the New Testament. For example, in Romans v. 17, the Apostle Paul says that "they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the

[4] Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers, New York.

one, even Jesus Christ." The same Apostle in his second Letter to Timothy, speaking of Christ, declares: "If we died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. ii. 11). And the Risen Christ is represented as saying to the angel of the Church in Laodicea: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. iii. 21). Here is implied, not honor merely, but also authority. One is reminded of the Parables of the Talents and of the Pounds, where in each case the master of faithful servants is said to have rewarded their fidelity by increasing their authority, making them rulers over many things. When we recall the fact that these masters were intended to represent the Divine Master in his dealings with his servants, the inference is plain and powerful, that the saints in heaven will in some way, of which the details are now to us unknown, share the functions of the Ruler and Judge of angels and of men. Such is the light which the Son of God has shed upon the question of the occupations of his saints in the future life; and with what he has been pleased to reveal we can well afford to wait until we see him "face to face."

CHAPTER XII

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN: PREPARATION

WHEN Jesus told his disciples that he was about to go away and prepare a place for them, and that he would return and receive them unto himself, there was no promise implied that heaven should be the final dwelling place of all men without respect to their fitness for it. The assurance was given to the disciples present at the time, and was meant to extend to all those who might become his true and faithful followers in the future. That is to say, it is no less essential that men should be prepared for heaven than that heaven should be made ready for men.

This is clearly the teaching of the Master in the Parable of the Marriage Feast, where one of the king's invited guests is represented as taking his place at the table without the customary wedding garment. When the host came in and saw this intruder, he asked him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The man was speechless, for he might have been properly clothed if he would, inasmuch as it was customary for the host to furnish his guests with festive apparel on such

occasions. He had been criminally careless, and thus invited the fate that overtook him; for the king said to his servants: "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness" (Matt. xxii. 11–13). In this parable the banquet hall represents heaven, the king is the Lord himself, and the speechless man is a type of all who present themselves as candidates for heavenly joys without the preparation which God demands, and which he enables all to acquire who earnestly wish it and who trust in divine help for its acquisition. It should be carefully noted that this demand for preparation is not arbitrary on the part of the Divine Host, but is based upon the fact that the benefits of heaven are restricted in the very nature of the case to those whose characters and tastes have been attuned to the conditions that prevail in the future abode of the saints. If it were possible for one out of harmony in his thoughts, feelings, aims, and spirit with the spiritual society and atmosphere of heaven to penetrate into the very midst of it, his very disharmony with his surroundings would be so intolerable to him that he would rush forth in speechless confusion, to assume his true place with those companions whose tastes and characters were akin to his own.

A vital question is, What is the nature of the preparation which must be made by every

rational, responsible soul in order to be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting? This inquiry finds its most authoritative answer in the teachings of Jesus himself. A part of this preparation is implied in the assurance of the Saviour on the cross to the dying robber at his side: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). There can be no doubt that this man was going from the cross to the companionship of Christ in the better world. He must have been fit for that world before he entered it. But he was evidently a rough man, probably a common criminal, very far from being spiritually minded and of exemplary character. His fitness consisted in the humble, penitent trust in divine mercy which he expressed in the appeal to Jesus: "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Such a spirit denoted fitness for beginning the heavenly life, and he had all the future before him in which to develop in knowledge and holiness.

Further light on this subject is to be found in the saying of Jesus: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). No doubt, the vision of God includes the present life as a spiritual experience of those whose hearts are pure; but it is certainly true that it applies to the future life even more completely. To "see God" is a pregnant phrase implying

holy fellowship with him, which is the very essence of heavenly bliss. In the nature of the case only the clean heart can perceive and enjoy the holy God and the pure society and atmosphere of heaven. There is an echo of this beatitude in the First Epistle of John (iii. 2, 3): "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Even in the comparative twilight of the Old Testament revelation there are gleams of this needed fitness for association with the holy God, as in Psalm xxiv. 3, 4; "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." In harmony with these Scriptures is the solemn admonition which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews lays upon his brethren: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14).

The need of preparation for heaven and something of the nature of it appear to be alluded to in certain utterances of Jesus with regard to laying up treasure in heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount he charged his hearers in words like these: "Lay not up for yourselves

treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (Matt. vi. 19–21). In another connection he speaks of "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth" (Luke xii. 33). To the Rich Young Ruler, who professed to have kept the moral law and yet was conscious of a lack of soul satisfaction, Jesus said: "One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mark x. 21). This last saying is carefully reported by all three Synoptists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which would seem to indicate that it made a profound impression upon the disciples who heard it.

We may not be able to know in our present limitations just what are the elements that enter into this process of laying up treasure in heaven; but we are safe in the conclusion that it embraces a life of self-denying service in behalf of others, coupled with generosity in giving to the needy from the stores with which Providence has furnished us. This is evidently the teaching of Jesus in what he says of final

rewards in the great Judgment scene (Matt. xxv). To the righteous on his right hand the King says: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." When the invited ones protested in their bewilderment that they knew not when they had thus ministered to the King, he replied: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

Of those who were commended by the King and invited to inherit the kingdom prepared for them, it is said in the closing words: "The righteous (shall go away) into life eternal." In plain terms this means that those who have in this world ministered to Christ by doing good in his name to his brethren have thus become fit to enter into life eternal and abide with saints and angels in heaven. It is a part, and a chief part, of their preparation for the life of perfect service above. This, however, is not an affirmation that the key to heaven is found in good works alone. Far from it. As a wise writer says: "It does not conflict with the doctrine that no man can enter the kingdom of

God unless he is born again; but it recognizes love to man as the best outward evidence of the new birth. It does not conflict with the doctrine that all men are saved by Christ; but it recognizes the truth that they may be saved by a Redeemer whose redemption they did not understand. But observe, that it is not the works, as such, which are commended, but the love which prompted them; that love which was their faith, which felt its way though in darkness to Him who is Love; and that when Christ is fully disclosed to them in the day of his glory, they will recognize him as their Lord" (Abbott, Com. on Matt.).[1]

Preparation for heaven, then, according to the recorded teachings of Jesus, consists in humble, penitent trust in divine mercy, purity of the inner life, and that grateful love that leads to deeds of helpful ministration to our fellow creatures in imitation of the example of the Man of Galilee. Much more might possibly be said concerning fitness for the eternal home of the saints; but, after all, what has been here presented is enough to show the truth as taught by the Master himself. He is "the Way," as well as the Truth and the Life, and his words are final.

[1]A. S. Barnes & Company, publishers, New York.

CHAPTER XIII

IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS

IN our quest of the truth concerning Heaven we have gone to the source of knowledge and examined all of our Lord's recorded utterances upon the subject, besides interpretative passages in the writings of his apostles and others. We have thus had opportunity to "know these things" in that degree in which it is possible for them to be known amid our earthly limitations. What are some things we have come to know?

First of all, it is clear that, according to the teachings of Jesus, the present life is not all, but beyond it there is a Heaven for his servants —a blessed state of being which is probably a place as well as a state. Further, it is clear that Heaven is the abode of God the Father, that it is the true and permanent abode of the Saviour, and that the unfallen angels have their residence in the home which their Creator and King glorifies with his peculiar presence. Our study of the words of Jesus assures us also that Heaven is the appointed home of God's saints, the true disciples of his Son; that the promise of the Master is a guarantee of its certainty and of its abundant rewards; that high dignities and honors are in store for those who share the

privations and labors of their Lord here below; that delightful fellowship with the Saviour, the unfallen angels, and the redeemed and glorified saints, will be the portion of all faithful disciples. We have seen that the experiences of the saints in heaven will include rest from toil and care, freedom from temptation and sin, deliverance from the fear of death, and every comfort and joy that Paradise can afford. Something of the occupations of the heavenly company we have learned also, all activities there being embraced in the joyous doing of the Father's will. Finally, the words of Jesus make it plain that all who aspire to the mansions of the blessed in the future life must make suitable preparation in this world by living in the spirit of Heaven.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," said Jesus to his disciples, after washing their feet and explaining that he had done it to set them an example of humility and service. We may well give the saying a wider application, and realize that knowledge of things beyond the veil demands a course of conduct in harmony with the enlightenment we have received. Many practical suggestions might be made as this discussion comes to a close. Let a few observations suffice.

It should increase our sense of responsibility to reflect that we are in possession of vital

knowledge beyond all the stores of wisdom which the ancients enjoyed. Not Plato among the philosophers, nor Moses the lawgiver, nor David the psalmist, nor Isaiah the prophet, ever possessed the knowledge of the future life that is open to us who have the words of the Son of God before our eyes. With this great accession of light there surely comes a great increase of responsibility.

While no responsibility is to be shunned and no duty neglected in our earthly relationships, we should never lose sight of the fact that "our citizenship is in heaven." It is fitting that we should rejoice along the path of our earthly pilgrimage, as we remember that Jesus bade his disciples rejoice because their "names were written in heaven." Surely, those who are registered in "the Lamb's Book of Life" may sing with Isaac Watts:

> "Then let out songs abound,
> And every tear be dry;
> We're marching through Immanuel's ground,
> To fairer worlds on high."

If Heaven lies just beyond the brief experience that men call death, why is it fitting that a child of God should think of death as an enemy to be feared, rather than as a friend to be welcomed? That which, viewed from this side, is the Gate of Death, is, when viewed from the

other side, the Gate of Life. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me," said David, who knew but little of what lay beyond. How much more confidently can a follower of Christ declare his fearless trust, when he knows that his Master has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Let no child of God be disconsolate in time of bereavement. If it were true that "death ends all," then indeed might thick darkness envelop the bereaved. But if it is true that the summons of death is but "the voice that Jesus sends to call them to his arms," why should a disciple of Jesus join the company of mourners who sorrow as those who have no hope? Especially let no child of God charge his Father with injustice or lack of sympathy when loved ones are taken away. If the one who has departed gave evidence of fitness for a better world, the bereaved may well find comfort in looking forward to a glad reunion "some sweet day by and by." And if, in the case of one about whose destiny there may be room for painful doubt, the heartache persists, let the departed soul be committed to the care of Him whose essential nature is love, and who is pledged to do the very best he can for every one whom he has made. The secret of peace at the open grave

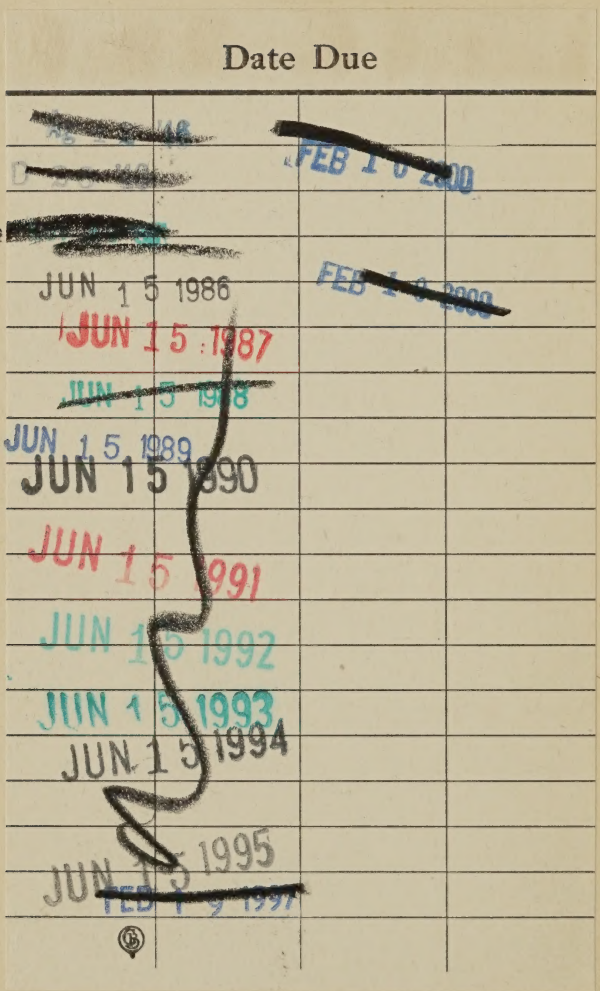
is found in trusting our absent friends to Infinite Love.

It is not amiss to recall before we close a solemn truth that has been spoken of already. If anyone aspires to the life of blessedness in companionship with God and his saints and angels, he must acquire fitness for it in this present life. He who would enter the Heaven of the future must first enter upon a life of heavenly-mindedness here below. If one is to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, according to the saying of Jesus, it is necessary for him here on earth to let his light shine before men, that they may see his good works and glorify his Father in Heaven. Salvation is, indeed, a matter of grace; but grace is the instrument divinely ordained for producing holy character, "without which no man shall see the Lord." The fate of the man without a wedding garment must never be forgotten by those who aspire to welcome at the banquet of the King.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Thrice happy will they be who use their heaven-sent knowledge in the cultivation of faith, hope, love, generosity, unselfish devotion to the will of God and the service of mankind. All such will surely find a wealth of happiness even amid the trials and disappointments of this mortal life. And when the final

morning shall dawn and the shadows flee away, all who have cultivated heavenly-mindedness here below will find the transition easy and natural to Heaven above—

"Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet;
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul."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